

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O 151053Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1128

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

S E C R E T BEIRUT 6250

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, US

SUBJECT: EVACUATION FROM LEBANON

REF: STATE 174474

1. FULLY AGREE THAT OUR FIRST-STAGE EVACUATION NEXT WEEK SHOULD TAKE ON INTERNATIONAL CHARACTER AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. ONCE WE HAVE GO-AHEAD, WE WILL GET WORD AROUND TO ALL OTHER EMBASSIES. IT WOULD BE HELPFUL BOTH FOR PURPOSE OF UNDERLING INTERNATIONAL NATURE OF EVACUATION AS WELL AS TO ENCOURAGE THIRD-COUNTRY PARTICIPATION, IF WE WERE TO INCLUDE REFERENCE TO THIS FACT IN OUR PROPOSED ANNOUNCEMENT (PARA TWO REFTEL). WE HAVE ACCORDINGLY ADDED A HEADING AS AN ATTENTION-CATCHER AND HAVE AMENDED DRAFT TEXT AS FOLLOWS:

BEGIN TEXT: AMERICAN EMBASSY ORGANIZING INTERNATIONAL GROUP DEPARTURE FOR JULY 20.

THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES IN BEIRUT WISHES TO INFORM ALL AMERICAN CITIZENS STILL IN LEBANON THAT IT WILL BE ELIMINATING THE MAJORITY OF ITS FUNCTIONS, INCLUDING CONSULAR SERVICES, AS OF MONDAY, JULY 19. IT IS FORCED TO TAKE THIS STEP BY THE INCREASING

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DIFFICULTIES

OF OPERATING IN BEIRUT, WHICH REQUIRE THE REDUCTION OF THE EMBASSY STAFF TO A BARE MINIMUM. THE EMBASSY WILL NO LONGER HAVE THE CAPABILITY EFFECTIVELY TO PROVIDE PROTECTION OR SERVICES FOR THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY AFTER THAT DATE. WE THEREFORE STRONGLY URGE ALL AMERICAN CITIZENS TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY AT THIS TIME.

THE EMBASSY IS ARRANGING TRANSPORTATION FOR DEPARTURE FROM WEST BEIRUT ON TUESDAY, JULY 20. DETAILS OF ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS FOR DEPARTURE WILL BE BROADCAST AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AND AT THAT TIME INFORMATION CAN ALSO BE SECURED BY EITHER VISITING OR TELEPHONING THE EMBASSY CONSULAR SECTION, TELEPHONE 361800 OR 348319. AMERICAN CITIZENS ARE URGED MEANWHILE TO INFORM THE EMBASSY BY NOON SUNDAY, JULY 18, IF THEY PLAN TO DEPART ON JULY 20.

LIKEWISE CITIZENS OF OTHER COUNTRIES ARE URGED TO INFORM THE CONSULAR SECTIONS OF THEIR EMBASSIES IF THEY PLAN TO DEPART WITH THIS GROUP ON JULY 20. IF THEIR EMBASSIES ARE CLOSED, THEY MAY CONTACT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY CONSULAR SECTION. END TEXT.

2. WE CONCUR WITH TIMETABLE PROPOSED EXCEPT THAT, IN ORDER TO CORRAL AS MANY AMERICANS AS POSSIBLE, IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE IF WE COULD GIVE THEM UNTIL SUNDAY NOON (BEIRUT TIME) TO REGISTER THEIR INTENTION TO LEAVE. THIS WOULD STILL ENABLE US TO CABLE FIGURES TO DEPT IN TIME FOR OPENING OF WASHINGTON BUSINESS JULY 18, DAY ON WHICH DECISION ON METHOD OF EVACUATION MUST BE MADE (PARA 3 REFTEL).

3. IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO ASSESS HOW MANY U.S. CITIZENS, THEIR ALIEN DEPENDENTS, AS WELL AS OTHER NATIONALS, MIGHT WANT TO JOIN IN ORGANIZED DEPARTURE. OUR GUESS IS THAT THERE WOULD PROBABLY BE AROUND 100, EVEN THOUGH WE INTEND IN OUR CONTACTS WITH AMERICANS TO UNDERLINE IN STRONGEST POSSIBLE TERMS DESIRABILITY OF THEIR LEAVING. MOST AMERICANS WHO REMAIN ARE OF LEBANESE EXTRACTION, MARRIED TO LEBANESE, OR IN GENERAL HAVE "GONE LOCAL."

4. ONCE WE HAVE DEPT'S GO-AHEAD, WE WILL CONTACT EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR AND PLO SECURITY OFFICIALS IN ACCORDANCE INSTRUCTIONS CONTAINED PARA 6 REFTEL.

5. CONCUR THAT MY DEPARTURE NEXT WEEK SHOULD NOT BE REVEALED. IN THIS CONNECTION, I WILL BE SUBMITTING SEPARATELY PROPOSED  
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STATEMENT WHICH MIGHT BE MADE (PERHAPS IN ANSWER TO PRESS QUERY IN WASHINGTON) REGARDING MY DEPARTURE AT THIS TIME.

6. IN REVIEWING RESIDUAL STAFFING PATTERN, WE CONCUR THAT WE SHOULD PROBABLY INCREASE NUMBER FROM 10 TO 14. THIS WOULD MEAN ADDING DEFENSE ATTACHE, POLITICAL OFFICER, ONE SECRETARY AND ONE STATE COMMUNICATOR.

7. FOLLOWING IS ANALYSIS OF AVAILABLE OPTIONS:

A. OVERLAND CONVOY TO DAMASCUS. SEVERAL CONVOYS HAVE SAFELY MADE THE TRIP ALL THE WAY TO DAMASCUS VIA SIDON, ZAHRANI, NABATIYAH, MARJUYAN, HASBANI VALLEY, SOUTHERN BEKAA, AND MASNAA. LARGEST CONVOY TO DATE WAS 80-CAR GERMAN CONVOY JULY 4. IF RESPONSE IS MINIMAL, U.S. CONVOY SHOULD NOT EXCEED 35 TO 50 VEHICLES. ASSUMING EMBASSY HAS TO PROVIDE GASOLINE FOR ALL CARS IN CONVOY, WE ESTIMATE THAT IT WILL REQUIRE MAXIMUM OF 300 GALLONS

TO GET CONVOY OF 50 CARS TO MARJUYUN, AND AN ADDITIONAL 300 GALLONS TO REACH DAMASCUS. SUPPLYING 300 GALLONS IS WITHIN EMBASSY'S CAPACITY AND WE WOULD REQUIRE REFUELING FROM SYRIAN SIDE. IF THIS OPTION IS SELECTED, WE INTEND TO TRY TO LEASE BUSES FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT TAKE PRIVATE CARS IN ORDER TO REDUCE THE OVERALL LENGTH OF CONVOY AND ALSO TO CONSERVE GASOLINE. OPTION HAS ADVANTAGES OF RELATIVELY LOW VISIBILITY AND SUCCESSFUL PRECEDENTS. DISADVANTAGE IS THAT LONG TIME ON ROAD INCREASES EXPOSURE TO DANGER FOR EVACUEES.

B. CIVILIAN SHIP FROM BAIN MILITAIRE. OPTION IS FEASIBLE AND HAS ADVANTAGES OF LIMITED DISTANCE TO BE TRAVELED (THUS LIMITING EXPOSURE OF PERSONNEL) AND CONSERVING GASOLINE. DISADVANTAGES ARE (1) RESPONSE TO AN OPTION WHICH DENIES PERSONS OPPORTUNITY OF TAKING THEIR OWN VEHICLES (AND THUS MORE PERSONAL BELONGINGS) MIGHT BE EVEN SMALLER THAN HOPED FOR; AND (2) DIFFICULTY IN TRANSFERR

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ING PERSONS AND THEIR HAND-CARRIED BAGGAGE FROM SMALL BOATS TO THE SHIP AT ANCHOR.

C. CIVILIAN SHIP FROM SIDON. OPTION HAS ADVANTAGE OF REDUCING DISTANCE TRAVELED AND EXPOSURE OF EVACUEES. OPTION MIGHT AGAIN FURTHER LIMIT RESPONSE TO CALL FOR EVACUATION. MAJOR

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DISADVANTAGE IS THAT IT WOULD EXPOSE AMCITS WHILE IN PORT OF SIDON TO VERY LARGE PALESTINIAN/LEFTIST MOSLEM POPULATION WHICH IS DEFINITELY HOSTILE. ON OTHER HAND, ARAB LEAGUE UNITS HAVE JUST MOVED INTO SIDON AND, PRESUMABLY, COULD BE CALLED UPON TO SUPPLEMENT PLO SECURITY. UNLESS SHIP COULD DOCK ALONGSIDE SIDON PIER, WHICH IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY, THIS OPTION HAS NO ADVANTAGE OVER TAKING SHIP FROM BAIN MILITAIRE.

D. AIR EVACUATION FROM BEIRUT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. OPTION OAS ADVANTAGES OF LIMITING DISTANCE TRAVELED/EXPOSURE OF EVACUEES AND SPEED OF OPERATION, PARTICULARLY FOR A SMALL (LESS THAN 150) GROUP. AS IN OPTIONS B AND C ABOVE, USE OF AIRPORT MIGHT FURTHER LIMIT RESPONSE TO CALL FOR EVACUATION (NO PERSONAL CARS), BUT SPEED AND CHANCE OF RAPID DELIVERY TO DESTINATION FAR FROM LEBANON MIGHT ATTRACT SOME, WHO MIGHT OTHERWISE BE HAVING DIFFICULTY IN DECIDING

TO LEAVE. IF ONLY ONE AIRCRAFT WERE REQUIRED, AND BY LIMITING LANDING AND TAKEOFF TO SOUTH, EXPOSURE TO ISOLATED, UNCONTROLLABLE ELEMENTS WOULD BE REDUCED. OBVIOUSLY USE OF AIRPORT WOULD DEPEND ON PLO AND ARAB LEAGUE FORCES SECURING AIRPORT AND SURROUNDING AREA, AS WELL AS ADVANCE AGREEMENT BY MARONITES NOT TO SHELL AIRPORT. ONE CANNOT, HOWEVER, EXCLUDE POSSIBILITY THAT EXTREMIST GROUP HOSTILE TO U.S. AND NOT RPT NOT UNDER PLO CONTROL MIGHT DIRECT AUTOMATIC FIRE AT AIRCRAFT IN KNOWLEDGE

THAT AIRPLANE CARRYING AMERICANS. (WE BELIEVE ALL SAM-7'S ARE UNDER FIRM PLO CONTROL.) UNLIKE IN CASE OF CAR OR SHIP, ONE BURST OF FIRE COULD WIPE OUT WHOLE GROUP. ON OTHER HAND, FULL COOPERATION OF PLO AND ARAB LEAGUE FORCES MINIMIZES THIS RISK. ALSO, THIS OPTION HAS MINOR DISADVANTAGES OF (1) REQUIRING EXTENSIVE (BUT FEASIBLE) COORDINATION AND (2) REFUELING PLO ATTEMPTS TO REOPEN AIRPORT FOR OWN POLITICAL/ECONOMIC PURPOSES.

8. THE SECURITY PEOPLE HERE BELIEVE THAT LOWEST PROFILE FOR MY DEPARTURE WOULD BE BY SHIP FROM BAIN MILITAIRE, WITH THE SECOND CHOICE FROM THE AIRPORT. THEY FEEL STRONGLY THAT A ROAD CONVOY PRESENTS TOO MUCH EXPOSURE FOR ME.

9. ACTION REQUESTED. IN ORDER TO PLACE ANNOUNCEMENT IN FRIDAY'S BEIRUT PRESS, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE HAVE DEPT'S APPROVAL TO PROCEED WITH SCENARIO NO LATER THAN 1300 TODAY, JULY 15, WASHINGTON TIME.

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